

**Foothill College**  
**Introduction to American Government & Politics**  
**Political Science 1**  
**Fall 2015, 5 Units MW 1-3:15pm 3301**

Instructor: Kerri Ryer  
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Course twitter tag: #PSatFC

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is a survey of the American political framework and processes. The course covers the Constitutional structure and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches at national, state and local levels. Using a Madisonian framework, this course will examine the challenges of democratic theory in practice. With an emphasis on pluralism, students will place themselves within current political debates. Viewed in the context of political parties, interest groups, and citizenship, students will engage with questions about power and justice. Emphasis will be placed on protests movements, such as the civil rights and women's rights movements. Partially satisfies IGTEC Area D: Social Sciences requirement. Refer to current transfer guide.  
See [www.Assist.org](http://www.Assist.org) for the most accurate and up-to-date transfer information

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Systematically analyze and interpret historical and current political issues from different points of view.
2. Distinguish fact from propaganda in analysis of political issues.
3. Observe and investigate American government and politics from a critical perspective.
4. Explain the difference between the federal perspective on constitutional issues and those of state and local governments.
5. Explore and evaluate the successes and failures of political institutions at the federal, state, and local government levels.
6. Participate in political discourse as an informed citizen.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. A successful student in this course will demonstrate development of critical, analytical, research, and writing skills.
2. Understand and utilize a variety of theoretical approaches to the analysis of institutional/policy outcomes of government.
3. Analytical use of concepts and research to support hypotheses and conclusions.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship*, 7<sup>th</sup> essentials edition. By: Barbour & Wright. ISBN: 978-1483352749
2. The instructor will also provide other assigned readings and media online.

### TEACHING & LEARNING COMMUNITY:

This course will incorporate a variety of learning activities and engagement opportunities. Participants will interact with lectures, read the text and additional materials, record academic notes, and participate in a series of discussions on hot button issues. Students are required to keep up with the course schedule and complete all assignments by their assigned due dates. Students will be required to actively engage in the teaching and learning process through group and peer teaching exercises. In our learning community, everyone's contributions are valued and respected. We are all in this together and I look forward to learning with you throughout the semester. The members of a course represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspective. I am committed to working with you to provide an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. We will work together to build this learning community by asking all class members to:

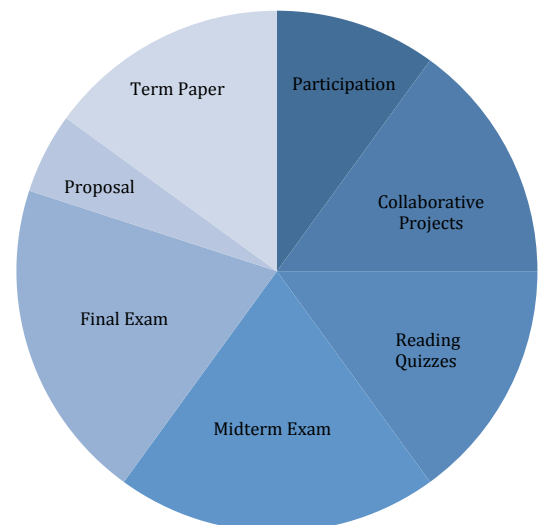
- Share their unique experiences, values and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- Keep confidential discussions that occur within class that are of a personal nature.
- Consider other ways that we may create an inclusive learning environment within this course and the Foothill College community.

### EVALUATION:

Your performance will be evaluated by your participation in class discussion and collaborative projects, a midterm exam, reading quizzes, a term paper proposal and term paper, and a final exam. Students are required to complete all assignments as outlined in the weekly schedule, no late work will be accepted. Only documented medical exceptions will be excused, though reasonable accommodations will be made in extenuating circumstances. Instructor reserves the right to drop anyone who fails to fulfill the weekly requirements for one or more weeks, but is not responsible for dropping disengaged students.

Your final grade will be based upon the following rubric:

Class Participation	10%
Collaborative Projects	15%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Term Paper Proposal	5%
Term Paper	15%
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Total	100%



Final grades will be assigned using the following evaluative grades and symbols:

A—Excellent

B—Good

C—Adequate

D—Less than adequate

F—Requirements have not been met

\*+ & - system will be used.

#### CODE OF CONDUCT:

All students are required to adhere to the college code of conduct at all times.

They can be found here:

<http://www.foothill.edu/services/handbook/>

<http://www.foothill.edu/services/handbook/index.php>

#### DISABILITY:

Students who require alternative formats for course materials or adaptive equipment because of a disability can request them through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) <http://www.foothill.edu/drc/>. Located in the Disability Resource Center room 5400. Their phone number is 650-3949-7017, and email [dobbinsmargo@foothill.edu](mailto:dobbinsmargo@foothill.edu) for more information/intakes. Please email me right away if you have a DRC need.

#### COMMUNICATION POLICY:

I will always be available during office hours. I am also available for communication by phone, skype, and ichtat by appointment. I prefer email communication, and will respond within 24 hours. If I do not respond within 24 hours expect that I did not receive your message and send the email again.

#### WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

I will drop anyone who does not participate in the first week of classes. After that, it is the student's responsibility to drop the course if they wish to withdraw. Do not expect that I will initiate the withdrawal procedures for you after the first week of classes, I will not. At the end of the quarter, students who stopped attending class without withdrawing will receive an "F" grade. Please see the important dates below. LATE DROP: After the deadline to drop with a "W," a student can only request a late drop if they have stopped attending class prior to the deadline to drop with a "W", and they have a documented medical issue (being a caretaker for another person with a medical issue qualifies), and/or they have been incarcerated. Students cannot receive a late drop past the deadline to drop with a "W" for any other reason - and must receive a grade or an Incomplete after that date.

#### IMPORTANT DATES:

September 21	First day of instruction
October 2	Last day to add / drop
October 16	Deadline to request pass / no pass
November 13	Last day to withdraw with "W"
November 26-29	Fall recess
Wednesday December 9	Final Exam 1-3pm

## SCHEDULE:

\*Schedule is tentative and subject to change.

### Week 1

September 21 & 23: In this unit you will engage in discussion with fellow classmates on the question: *What is politics?* Your engagement in this activity will facilitate your ability to think critically about the conflictual nature of politics. Students will discuss several paradigms in the social sciences and acquire numerous lenses to utilize when examining politics throughout the semester.

What is Politics?

-Paradigms in the Social Sciences

-Models of Social Justice

Readings: Barbour Chapter 1

23<sup>rd</sup> Reading Quiz #1 due by 1pm

### Week 2

September 28 & 30: In this unit you will acquire fundamental skills for navigating and understanding the political world in your every day life. We will discuss in depth models of democracy and the foundation of the American political system.

American Citizens & Political Culture

-Models of Democracy

-Evolution of American Elites & American Democracy

Readings: Barbour Chapter 2 & 3

28<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #2 due by 1pm

Collaborative Project #1 Due

### Week 3

October 5 & 7: In this unit you will play an active role in an historical narrative construction of the founding of American democracy and constitutionalism. With a focus on the Federalist papers, students will form a critical understanding of the U.S. Constitution, its Amendments, the system of checks and balances, and its limitations.

Federalism & the U.S. Constitution

-American Constitutionalism and the birth of American Democracy

Readings: Barbour Chapter 4

5<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #3 due by 1pm

### Week 4

October 12 & 14: With a focus on the political socialization process, students will acquire skills for conducting public opinion research. This will assist you in critically analyzing public opinion research and the role it plays in policy formation. We will then examine the relationship between public opinion and the mass media. Students will critically analyze mass media's influence upon political culture in the U.S. and public policy.

Political Socialization & the Media

-Role of Media in American Political Culture

Readings: Barbour Chapters 11 & 15

12<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #4 due by 1pm

Collaborative Project #2 Due

### Week 5

October 19 & 21: In this unit students will develop skills necessary to analyze the various theories of representation. Students will engage in the legislative process and develop an understanding of the difficulty in passing legislation. We will discuss the powers, duties and organization of Congress.

Development of Congress  
-Congressional structure  
-Legislative process  
Readings: Barbour Chapter 7  
19<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #5 due by 1pm  
**21<sup>st</sup> MIDTERM**

#### Week 6

October 26 & 28: In this unit students will explore the executive branch and construct an outlook on formal and informal presidential powers. With a focus on leadership styles, students will evaluate several presidents.

Development of the Presidency  
-Leadership styles  
-Executive branch  
Readings: Chapter 8  
26<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #6 due by 1pm  
Term paper topic discussion forum

#### Week 7

November 2 & 4: In this unit students will acquire skills to evaluate the power of the judicial branch and analyze recent Supreme Court decisions. We will discuss judicial philosophies and the role of politics in the theoretically apolitical branch.

Development of the Judiciary  
-The American Legal System and the Courts  
-Judicial philosophy  
Readings: Barbour Chapter 10  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Quiz #7 due by 1pm  
Collaborative Project #3 Due

#### Week 8

November 9 & 11 \*9<sup>th</sup> is Veterans Day No School: In this unit you will chart the history of political parties in the United States. Different party systems and the impact of party polarization upon public policy will be analyzed.

Political Parties  
-Political institutions at the state and federal level  
-Party systems  
Readings: Barbour Chapter 12  
9<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #8 due by 1pm  
11<sup>th</sup> *Term paper Proposal DUE*

#### Week 9

November 16 & 18: In this unit we will discuss interest groups and campaign finance. We will distinguish the role of interest groups to that of political parties. Students will acquire analytic tools to evaluate the power of interest groups and individuals.

Interest Groups  
-Interest group tactics  
-types of interest groups  
Readings: Barbour Chapter 13  
16<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #9 due by 1pm  
Collaborative Project #4 Due

### Week 10

November 23 & 25: In this unit you will acquire analytic tools necessary to analyze the U.S. election system. Who votes? Why / why not? We will discuss the theoretical foundation of the U.S. election system and analyze elections in practice at the federal, state and local levels.

#### Campaigns & Elections

- Political institutions at the state and federal level
- Electoral college reform plans

Readings: Barbour Chapter 14

23<sup>rd</sup> Reading Quiz #10 due 1pm

25<sup>th</sup> Term paper workshop (bring a rough draft)

### Week 11

November 30 & December 2: In this unit you will acquire skills to critically analyze your civil liberties as outlined in the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Supreme Courts' civil rights doctrines. We will discuss in depth protests and protest movements in American history with a focus on the civil rights and women's rights movements.

#### Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

- Protest & Protest Movements in American Society
- Outcomes of Protest Movements
- Impact of Civil Rights Act 1964 & 1991

Readings: Barbour Chapter 5 & 6

30<sup>th</sup> Reading Quiz #11 due by 1pm

Collaborative Project #5 Due

### Week 12

December 7 & 9

Final exam review-

**7<sup>th</sup> Term Paper due by 1pm.**

**9<sup>th</sup> FINAL Exam 1-3pm**